BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

by

Charles William Hamilton

(A.B., Ohio Wesleyan University, 1935)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

1937

Outline

The Social Implications of the Sermon on the Mount

Introduction

The problem of this thesis is to study the so-called Sermon on the Mount contained in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew's Gospel and to point out some of the social implications of the discourse. In the Gospel of Luke (6:20-49 and other parallels), there is an account of similar teachings to those found in Matthew's Gospel. In the interpretation of Matthew's account, it is therefore necessary to refer to parallel or partly-parallel sections in Luke's Gospel.

By "social implications" the writer means those inferences and deductions which concern man's social relationships. Human relationships mean mutual responsibilities and duties and an individual today is quite aware of the fact that he is a person among other persons, a member of the social order, a part of the social whole. Social injustice, low ideals, lack of opportunity, and the lust for power are all elements of social living today. Obviously, it is impossible to study all of the social implications of the Sermon as the differentiation between personal and social human relationships is not a sharp one.

This thesis does not purpose to be a detailed study in textual criticism which would involve translations, possible interpolations, and such matters. Instead, the Sermon is studied as it is found in the American Standard Edition of the Revised Bible. Throughout the thesis, there is a distinction made between social "implications" and social "teachings" for the writer contends that according to the Synoptic records, Jesus' teachings are social only by implication and that it is hardly proper to speak of the "social teachings" of Jesus.

Part I of the thesis gives a brief historical background of the Sermon. Certain factors regarding the original form of the discourse, the circumstances of delivery, the parallels in Luke, Jesus' environment, apocalypticism, and Jesus as a teacher must be briefly understood and interpreted as a basis for Part II of the thesis. The second part is concerned with the social implications of certain passages in the Sermon and throughout the study the spirit of Jesus! teaching and life are stressed in interpreting the literal words of the recorded Sermon.

PART I

The Historical Background of the Sermon on the Mount

1. An Analysis

We are greatly indebted to the author of the Gospel According to St. Matthew for recording the teachings of Jesus, especially the long discourse found in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters. Jesus is not responsible for the name, "the Sermon on the Mount". David Smith states that Saint Augustine was the first man to designate the discourse by the name by which it has been known throughout the centuries.[1] W. C. Allen has given us a critical and comprehensive analysis of the so-called Sermon on the Mount.[2]

A. Nine Beatitudes, 5:3-12.
B. Two metaphors of discipleship, 5:13-16.
C. Relation of the Christian character to the Law 5:17-48.

The Christian character is not released from the obligations of the Law. It is under still heavier responsibilities.

Christian "righteousness" is to be not less than that of the scribes, but greater, 17-20.

Five illustrations of the permanence of the Law and of this greater righteousness.
(1) Threefold interpretation of "do not kill," 21-22.
Twofold application, 23-26.
(2) Interpretation of "do not commit adultery," 27-28.

1. Smith, David, Commentary on Matthew, p. 62
2. Allen, W.C., Gospel According to S. Matthew (ICC), p. 37-38

(3) Interpretation of "do not swear falsely," 33-34a.
Fourfold application, 34b-37.
(4) Interpretation of the "lex talionis", 38-39a.
Fourfold application, 39b-42.
(5) Interpretation of "love thy neighbour,"43-35.
Twofold illustration, 46-48.

D. Three illustrations of the way in which the Christian "righteousness" is to exceed that of the Pharisees, 6:1-18.
(1) Alms, 2-4.
(2) Prayer, 5-15.
(3) Fasting, 16-18.

E. Three Prohibitions, 6:19-7:6
(1) Relation to wealth, 19-34.
(2) Judgment of others, 7:1-5.
(3) Perverted zeal, 6.

F. Three Commands, 7-23.
(1) Prayer, 7-12.
(2) The narrow gate, 13-14.
(3) False prophets, 15-23.

G. Concluding Parable, 24-27.

2. The Original Form of the Discourse

Bible scholars differ among themselves as to whether Matthew or Luke gives us the sermon in its more original form. J. Weiss and Wellhausen hold the view that the briefer, terser forms in Luke 6:17-49 preserve the more accurate words of Jesus. Harnack, however, argues strongly for the early character of the Matthean account. The Sermon has been regarded as one address and as a compilation of a series of sermons for the practical use of Christians. Neither view would deny the authenticity of the sayings in the discourse. However, "It is the

prevailing opinion among New Testament scholars that in Matthew V-VII we have an account of a discourse actually delivered by Jesus, the theme and substance of which are here preserved."[1] Obviously, the Sermon is not one sympathetic whole and the record as we find it in the Gospel is not coextensive with the original teaching of Jesus. The author of the Gospel has built the other material which he has upon the original discourse of Jesus. Probably, Matthew's account contains only excerpts or a digest of Jesus' teaching as there seems to have been no way of reporting a discourse verbatim and entire.

Jesus often taught the people at length[2] and certainly the record as we have it is not a lengthy discourse. He had too much insight as a teacher to make important statements, full of meaning and difficult for the hearers offhand to grasp without connecting with each specific saying a more explicit and concrete teaching to illustrate it and apply it. Even the most advanced among Jesus' hearers could hardly take in so much lofty teaching at one and the same time.

1. Votaw, C.W., Hastings' Bible Dictionary, Extra Vol.p.1 Among scholars who hold this view are: Origen, Augustine, Chrysostom, Luther, Godet, Bruce, Wendt, Sanday, Plummer, B.Weiss, H.Weiss, Burkitt, Bacon and many others.
2. Mark 4:1f, 35: 6-34

Parallels to sections of Matthew's account of the Sermon are found elsewhere in the Gospels with a different environment. Luke most certainly would not have taken a discourse such as Matthew V-VII and scattered its fragments as is done in his Gospel. Matthew was a compiler and his Gospel indicates that he groups events and sayings in alternate sections, a fact which even the casual reader cannot fail to notice. Clearly, these topical groups are too artificial to represent the real order of the teachings of Jesus. "Certain sections of Matthew V-VII are less evidently connected than the others with the specific theme of the Sermon and its development e.g. 5:25,26,31,32; 6:7-15; 7:6, 7-11,22f."[1] Some of the most characteristic of the sayings in the compilation do not belong to the opening stages of Jesus' ministry, but to that intensely critical phase which preceded his withdrawal from Jewish territory. Considering the foregoing statements, however, "The theory that the Sermon on the Mount is entirely made up of short utterances cannot be sustained....There is too much order in the report as a whole, and too much coherence in the parts, especially when theless relevant sections are set aside as probable interpolations, for the supposition that we have here nothing more than a number of pearls on a string."[2]

---

1. Votaw, C.W., Hastings' Bible Dictionary.Extra Volume p.1
2. Plummer, Alfred, Gospel According to St.Matthew, p.56

3. The Date, Place, and Circumstances of Delivery

At the time that the Synoptic writers wrote their accounts, many of Jesus' teachings were still current, but recollection as to when and where he had uttered this or that saying was already hopelessly lost. Modern Biblical scholarship points out that within a generation of Jesus' death there existed a written collection of such remembered sayings - the quarry "Q" to which both Matthew and Luke turned for the non-Marcan material in their Gospels. Which saying belonged to what occasion was, as a rule, not so much a matter of surmise as rather past all accurate surmising. Matthew omits all indications of date, but it can be seen that it is incorrect to place the Sermon at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. "'The multitudes' in verse 1 clearly refers to the 'great multitudes' in the previous verse; and these great multitudes did not gather until our Lord had been at work for some time and the report of Him had spread through Syria, Peraea, Judaea, etc. Secondly, the teaching in the Sermon is not elementary, it is evidently intended for those who had already received a good deal of instruction."[1] Jesus' listeners must have been acquainted with

---

1. Plummer, Alfred, Gospel According to St. Matthew, p.54

Him and were ready for his religio-ethical ideas. The first half of Jesus' ministry in Galilee seems to be the most generally accepted time of the delivery of the discourse around which other teachings were built.

We must be vague as to the place where the Sermon was delivered. "He went up into the mountain", but no mountain has been mentioned. As in Matthew 14:23 and 25:29, high ground in the neighbourhood of the Sea of Galilee is, no doubt, meant. It is possible that there was one spot to which Jesus would go to teach, and it was called "the mountain". We find mention of "the mountain" in Mark 3:13; Luke 6:12; John 6:3, 15. "The mention of this going up to the high ground above the lake lets us know that we are passing from the general sketch in 4:23-25 to a definite occasion."[1]

The discourse as we have it recorded in Matthew is not addressed exclusively or specifically to the apostles. It contains no trace of confidential teaching and there is no portion of the discourse which did not and cannot pertain equally to Jesus' followers. Burton and Bacon maintain that the Sermon was spoken to an inner circle of followers. Godet, Bruce, Bleek, and others say that

1. Plummer, Alfred, Gospel According to St.Matthew, p.54

the Sermon is addressed to the multitude. Still others, such as B. Weiss, hold the theory that it was addressed to close disciples, but overheard by the multitude. Votaw advances a plausible interpretation by saying: "The multitude was a disciple-multitude in the sense that many were professed followers of Jesus, many were contemplating discipleship, and all were favourably disposed towards Him, listening with interest to His teaching."[1]

4. The Matthean Account compared with the Account in the Gospel of Luke

In both Matthew V-VII and Luke VI:20-49, we have accounts of the Sermon. They differ somewhat in setting, verbal expression, and content, but are essentially one discourse. This is the opinionof Sanday, Wendt, Hugo Weiss, B. Weiss, Bruce, Burton, H. Holtzmann, Julicher, Wernle, Bacon, and many others. Both Gospels indicate that the Sermon belongs to the early Galilaean ministry. In both accounts, we find the mountain, the representative multitude, the healings, and the address to the disciples. The true righteousness is the theme of both accounts and it is developed in a similar manner - a characterization of this righteousness, with specific teachings as to its effect, and an exhortation for men to choose this way of

---

1. Votaw, C. W., Hastings' Bible Dictionary, extra vol. p. 3

living. Each account starts with the Beatitudes, and closes by urging men to do God's will as revealed in Jesus' teaching, ending with the parable of the house-builders.

Various scholars differ in relating the parallel material in the two Gospels. I present the following table of parallel teaching as compiled by Votaw.[1]

Matthew 5:3	---Luke 6:20
Matthew 5:4,6	---Luke 6:21
Matthew 5:11,12	---Luke 6:22,23
Matthew 5:39,40,42	---Luke 6:29,30
Matthew 5:44-48	---Luke 6:27,28,32-36
Matthew 6:1-34	has no parallel in Luke 6:20-49
Matthew 7:1,2	---Luke 6:37,38b
Matthew 7:3-5	---Luke 6:41,42
Matthew 7:12	---Luke 6:31
Matthew:7:16,17	---Luke 6:43,44
Matthew 7:21	---Luke 6:46
Matthew 7:24-27	---Luke 6:47-49

"Matthew's account has 107 verses, Luke's account 29. Of Luke's 29 verses, 23½ find a parallel in the Matthaean account, where they are arranged as 26 verses. There is no parallel in Matthew 5-7 for Luke 6:24-26; 38a,39,40,45. Of Matthew's remaining 81 verses, 34 find a parallel in Luke outside of chapter 6, (in chapters 11-14,16 as follows):

Matthew 5:13	---Luke 14:34,35
Matthew 5:15	---Luke 11:33 (8:16)
Matthew 5:18	---Luke 16:17
Matthew 5:25,26	---Luke 12:58,59
Matthew 5:32	---Luke 16:18
Matthew 6:9-13	---Luke 11:2-4
Matthew 6:19-21	---Luke 12:33,34
Matthew 6:22,23	---Luke 11:34-36
Matthew 6:24	---Luke 16:13
Matthew 6:25-33	---Luke 12:22-31
Matthew 7:7-11	---Luke 11:9-13
Matthew 7:13,14	---Luke 13:24
Matthew 7:23	---Luke 13:27

---

1. Votaw, C.W., Hastings' Bible Dictionary, Extra Vol. p.4

"This leaves 47 verses of the Matthean discourse which have no parallel in the third Gospel:Mt.5:5, 7-10,14,16,17,19-24,27-31,33-38,41,43:6:1-8,14-18, 34: 7:6,15,18,20,22. That is, four-ninths of the Sermon in Matthew is peculiar to that Gospel."[1]

A study of the parallels as compiled by Votaw shows great variety in degrees of similarity of wording. Sometimes the two passages are almost verbatim the same e.g. Matthew 7:3-5 and Luke 6:41-42. Sometimes, however, the differences are very considerable as in the parable by which each account ends. The Golden Rule (Mt. 7:12- Luke 6:31) is differently worded. The parallels indicate that the report in Matthew is closer to the original Sermon if the same sermon is the basis of both reports.[2] The greater fulness of Matthew's account indicates the same. Matthew wrote for Jews and Jewish phrases abound, also references to the Old Testament. It is much more likely that Luke, or the Gentile source which he used, omitted these Jewish touches and topics, as lacking interest for Gentile Christians, than that Matthew inserted them merely to please his Jewish readers. Jesus' audience would consist of

---

1. Ibid., p. 4
2. Ibid., p. 7 Votaw bears out this conclusion by tracing the history of the transmission of the contents, form, and substance of the Sermon on the Mount during the years 29-85 A.D.

Jews and, no doubt, the discourse delivered by him had much of the Jewish tone which we find in Matthew's report. "In all these cases it is simply inconceivable that Saint Matthew had before him, and has altered, the text presented in Saint Luke."[1]

5. The Environment of Jesus

The question of environment is always important in considering any personality and it is especially important that we should know the social background of Jesus' day. We must reckon with the Jewish life which influenced Jesus, and all the more so "because so many scholars maintain that the expectations which were current in his day not only affected the records of his teaching, but fashioned the mental fabric of the Teacher himself."[2] Some scholars construe the terms which Jesus used in the Sermon entirely in the lurid light of Apocalypse.

At the time of Jesus' public ministry, Judaea and Galilee were directly subject to the Romans, and were governed by a procurator (Pontius Pilate, A.D. 26-36), who was to some extent subordinate to the legatus of Syria. Thus, Jesus confronted social conditions very different from those with which the earlier prophets dealt. As Rome had taken out of the hands of the Jews practically all

---

1. Harnach, Adolph, The Sayings of Jesus, p.57
2. Wright, T.H., The Sermon on the Mount For Today, p.11

political control, the most insistent social problems were not political. The Roman rule was harsh and unfeeling, and the people whom Rome had to govern were restless and turbulent. Roman taxation was a sore spot in the Jewish consciousness. A class of underlings (publicans) were employed to collect tolls and taxes for the Romans and they were regarded by their Jewish countrymen almost as outcasts. "Injustice on the one side and bitter prejudice on the other characterized the respective attitudes of rulers and ruled. What was supremely needed was a common principle on which both could stand and justice could be established."[1] There was nothing to arouse the enthusiasm and effort of each individual and to bind men together in united service. In all classes there was a pathetic lack of a developed social consciousness and self-seeking individualism was rampant.

Palestine contained many different races and classes, each full of bitter hatred and contending with the others for what it regarded as its rights. The passion for political independence, which was ultimately to express itself in an organized revolt against Rome, had not yet become the distinctive interest of an established group with the same clear marks of differentiation that characterized

---

1. Kent, C.F., Social Teachings of the Prophets and Jesus, p. 181

Sadducees, Pharisees, Zadokites, or Essenes. All through the period of Jesus' life, however, the atmosphere of Palestine was surcharged with the spirit of revolution. To understand his times, we must know of the various sects which were in conflict. The Sadducees consisted mainly of certain aristocratic priestly families who held almost a monopoly of the high priesthood, and who played an important part in the Sanhedrin, which had considerable power. They were typical opportunists, and were determined to keep their rights and privileges. They were sensitive to public disorder which would serve as an excuse to the Romans for displacing them.

The Pharisees (lit. Separatists or Purists) were the religious party and were pledged to a high standard of life and scrupulous performance of religious duties.[1] Unfortunately, the high standard was outward rather than inward. The elaborate casuistry to which the Pharisees had recourse was used as a means of evading moral obligations (Mk.7:1-13; Mark 12:38-40; and Matthew 23:13-33), and resulted in a spirit of hard, narrow, self-righteousness.[2]

The Scribes, or professed students of the law, supplied the Pharisees with their principles and they had to a large extent taken the place of the priests as the preach-

---

1. Matthew 23:23
2. Sanday, W., Outlines of the Life of Christ, p.10

ers and teachers of Judaism. They worked in the synagogues and the Rabbinical school and some of the scribes were the great religious authorities of the day. "It was their successors who built up the Talmud. There were differences of opinion within the body such as the rival schools of Hillel and Shammai, but without, their dicta were unquestioned."[1] Although most of the Pharisees, at this date, held aloof from politics, on the ground that religion could be practiced under any domination, they were unhappy and the mass of the people were burning to throw off the yoke of Rome.

The party of action which wanted to revolt was known as the Zealots. In the sect of the Essenes were present oriental and Persian influences. Although these various sects were narrow and thoughtless of others, it must be emphasized that the people were in constant touch with Hellenistic civilization and had a broad view of the world. The trade routes between Egypt and the countries to the north passed through their land. The Jews of the Diaspora, constantly coming and going to the great feasts at Jerusalem, influenced local life, and there is reason to think that the amount of intellectual intercourse and interchange was by no means inconsiderable.

---

1. Sanday, W. Outlines of the Life of Christ, p. 10

Religion was everything to the Jews of Jesus' day. The revelation of Israel to God and the purpose of God with Israel remained as the supreme subjects of thought and discussion. In the synagogue, Jesus heard the Law read from childhood. "To the Temple he was taken in due course for the performance of his inherited duties there. His own reading of the Scriptures must have been deep, since his teaching is saturated by quotations and illuminated by fresh interpretations of nearly all parts of the Old Testament, and especially of the Psalms, Isiah, and Daniel."[1] The Old Testament revealed God to Jesus. The worst side of the Rabbinical Judaism was its identification of morality with formal obedience to written law. The identification of morality with law led to evils, for law can deal only with overt actions. Motive and spirit were comparatively disregarded although some Rabbis would insist on rightness of motive, for the Prophets in their Sacred Books would give them that insight. However, the legal conception was prevalent. If this had not been true, Jesus would have not taught the way he did. The words "Scribes", "Pharisees", and "Hypocrites" would have had no point.

The stress on overt acts led to an elaborate doctrine of salvation by works even though this doctrine was not definitely formulated or universally held and acted upon.

1. Mackenzie, W. Douglas, Ency. of Rel. and Ethics, Vol. 7, p. 508

The Talmud indicates to us what is little less than an idolatry of learning. Rabbinical learning and intellectualism were exalted. Also, the masses were burdened by both traditional and original law, and an individual of ordinary intellect could not hope to be fully familiar with the laws of Judaism. It was unfortunate that the Jews fell back upon national privilege as a substitute for real reformation of life. Considering these shortcomings, however, "The Jew knew better than any of his contemporaries in Greece or Rome or in the East what religion was. He had a truer conception of God, and of the duty of man towards God."[1] The Jew was serious on the subject of religion.

The Jewish scholar, Klausner, gives us a good account of the messianic expectations of the Jewish people.[2] He points out that the degree of expectation was not the same with all. The Zealots were the most enthusiastic and they wanted to hasten the coming of the Messiah by force. The Sadducees did not deny belief in the Messiah, since the belief was found in Scripture, but they were indifferent towards the Messianic expectations. For the Essenes, the idea of the Messiah had become a mystical

---

1. Sanday, W., Outlines of the Life of Christ, p. 21
2. Klausner, J., Jesus of Nazareth, p. 201

idea and was bound up with a supernatural idea of social equality, of purity, of righteousness, and of perfect worship. "A central position was held by the sect of the Pharisees who represented the bulk of the people; they did not allow belief in the Messiah to evaporate into a species of visionariness far removed from practical possibilities; but they believed in it with all their heart and made it a practical and a spiritual ideal."[1] Klausner stresses that the Pharisees thought that it was not their part "to hasten the end" nor "to abandon themselves to any miracle-worker" whereby they might bring disaster on the nation.

From the foregoing brief sketch, we may understand some of the elements in the environment of Jesus' day, Mackenzie says: "In such a mixed atmosphere at once of stubborn faith and of spiritual bitterness, of national humiliation and legalistic pride, of religious fervour and moral blindness, of political defeat and apocalyptic hope, Jesus grew up."[2] There were many social problems in this early century. The Jewish temple authorities had an unscrupulous and grasping attitude toward the common people, and insidious graft was marked by time-honored religious sanction. "Insidious and deadly was the religious ostracism which was meted out by the religious leaders of the nation

---

1. Klausner, J., Jesus of Nazareth, p. 201
2. Mackenzie, W. Douglas, Ency. of Rel. and Ethics, Vol. 7 p. 508

to the helpless, ignorant, toiling masses... who were either unable to conform to the rigorous demands of the ceremonial law, or else by virtue of their social position and defective moral training lacked the desire and the incentive."[1] Many of the "self-righteous" Pharisees regarded the shepherdless classes as little more than social refuse. Even among the Pharisaic leaders of the nation there was a mercenary spirit which blunted their social consciousness. Undue importance was given to wealth and social values were sadly distorted among the common people due to their greed for wealth. Thus, we see that there were crying social needs and in his message, Jesus goes to the source of the troubles. Simply and directly, Jesus sought to effect not temporary reforms, but to remove the causes that lay at the roots of these social problems.

6. Apocalypticism and Jesus' Message to Society

It has been pointed out that there were a great many Jews who expected a vast intervention of Almighty Power, more or less spectacular, such as was predicted by some of their prophets or by the writers known as apocalyptic. For example, in the later prophets, in Joel and particularly in Daniel, prognostications of signs and wonders in heaven and earth are not wanting, and these less convincing elements of the prophetic outlook are enormously extended by the Apocalyptists. The Book of Daniel, to

1. Kent., C.F., Social Teachings of the Prophets and Jesus, p. 181

encourage the struggling Hebrews of Maccabaean days, predicted a new Kingdom which was to be essentially humane and of heavenly origin.

"The most valuable and permanent element in the apocalyptic hope was the assurance of a goal to which the Divine purpose was leading. This was in line with the prophets' aspiration, and with it Jesus was ardently in sympathy."[1] In this thesis, however, it is necessary to recognize important New Testament scholars who interpret Jesus almost exclusively in the light of what is known as his eschatology. They contend that Jesus, a Jew, shared the national expectancy and was carried away by the current excitement. The implication is that Jesus' teaching is beautiful and delightful, but it is only suitable to the simple primitive folk of Galilee for the brief period before the Messianic Kingdom was to come. They point out that Jesus' teachings to hate father and mother, to take no anxious thought for the future, to abandon personal possessions are a result of his "interim ethics."

Warschauer has written an eschatological life of Jesus.[2] Albert Schweitzer is the leading exponent of this theory that the whole of Jesus' teaching was conceived under

1. Wright, T.H., The Sermon on the Mount for Today, p.13
2. Warschauer, J., The Historical Life of Christ

the sense of imminent catastrophe thus classing it as "a temporary expedient", "an interim ethic", and "purely eschatological." Johannes Weiss admitted that Jesus used the apocalyptic idea with modesty, restraint, and sobriety, but Schweitzer said that Weiss made an end of the modern view that Jesus founded the Kingdom of God. Schweitzer claims that Jesus had no thought in his parables of any germ present in small beginnings, working to a great issue.

Martin Dibelius of Heidelberg recently emphasized that the Sermon on the Mount presupposes a belief that the world will soon come to an end and is merely an eschatological stimulus with an eschatological background. He stated that the Sermon on the Mount's purpose was to transform the men of Jesus' day and not to improve the world nor to give us a solution for our modern questions. According to this brilliant Biblical scholar, the principles taught in the Sermon on the Mount will come into value in the new age - when the Kingdom does come. Another exponent of this theory is Alfred Loisy who states:

> "Envisaging the imminent end of a social order which he had no cause to wish to save or even ameliorate, Jesus advised his own to endure all of the possible difficulties in the spirit of charity and in the hope of the promised felicity....It is quite superfluous to seek in the gospel a doctrine of social and political economy or even a program of life for individual existences which must enroll themselves, according to the order of nature, in the indefinite continuation of humanity."[1]

1. Loisy, Alfred, Les Evangiles Synoptiques, Vol.I, p.234f

The anti-eschatologists are headed by Wilhelm Bousset who claims that Jesus' view of the future is not eschatological, and that eschatology is not essential to the understanding of him. Bousset maintains that the exclusive emphasis on eschatology allows the essential originality and power of the personality of Jesus to slip through its fingers and grasps instead conterporary conditions, which, though important, are less essential. He claims that the deep sense of Jesus of the Fatherhood of God, his frank joy and enthusiasm in life and in this world, his sanity of judgment regarding earthly goods, which are not to be renounced but subordinated, are all an inner negation of the Jewish eschatology. He says that what appears in Jesus to be eschatological teaching is essentially the old prophetic teaching with its positive ethical emphasis.[1]

Rashdall attempts to compromise these extreme views by saying that whether the Kingdom is looked upon as a future event or as present, as to come gradually or to come suddenly, the basis is both ethical andspiritual. He says: "Though there is no necessary incompatibility between eschatoligical hopes and an ethic of eternal significance, the teaching of Jesus might have been so far affected in detail by these eschatological notions as to

---

1. Bousset, W., ~~Jesus,~~ p. 71f

render it incapable of becoming the concrete expression of the moral ideal for a modern civilized community or rather for a universal, world-wide, 'absolute' religion."[1] He points out that the details in Jesus' teaching have a certain colouring which is local and temporary and are used to illustrate fundamental, eternal, and truly ethical principles.

Men who are interested in the so-called "social Gospel" are greatly concerned with this New Testament problem. Rauschenbusch realizes the implications[2] and McCown says, "If Jesus was merely a Jewish messianist, looking for the immediate supernatural overturning of the existing social and natural order, his ethical ideals can have little meaning for us."[3]

It is the writer's contention that we owe a debt to the scholars who have interpreted the ancient eschatology. They have given us much light on the mission and message of Jesus, but when they say that he was not interested in human conduct, that his message has no vital implications for today, and that "he was not a teacher, but an imperious ruler,"[4] it is impossible for the writer to

---

1. Rashdall, H., Conscience and Christ, p.71 f
2. Rauschenbush, W., A Theology for the Social Gospel, p.208
3. McCown, C.C., The Genesis of the Social Gospel, p.23
4. Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, p.401

follow the reasoning which brought them to these conclusions. There are apocalyptice elements in Jesus' teaching. "The thoughts of Jesus would naturally bear some impression of the experience which he shared with his fellow-countrymen....But it was no Jewish victory he expected, no Zealot triumph of retaliation, but a Divine operation which should bring about a new beginning, not for Jews alone, but for all mankind, a new valuation of life and duty, in a re-created sense of God."[1] Jesus thought of the Kingdom as already actual in faithful souls and when he used the imagery of current expectations it was because he lived so near to the heart of man as well as near the heart of God.

In spite, however, of all logical considerations the theory of an "interim ethic" may be confidently put aside. Scott gives us two good reasons.[2] First, it rests on the false hypothesis that Jesus' intention was to prescribe a number of set rules. His precepts are rather to be regarded as so many illustrations of great principles, which by their very nature are eternally valid. Secondly, while the apocalyptic element in Jesus' teaching must be fairly recognized, it cannot be pressed in any rigid and one-sided way. His attitude toward the current beliefs

1. 1. Wright, T.H., The Sermon on the Mount for Today, p.17
2. Scott, E.F., The Ethical Teachings of Jesus, p.43

shows that he did not allow himself to be fettered by them. Jesus was not in haste like we would expect one under the sense of the shortness of life's opportunity. He went quietly about doing good, teaching with a calmness and apparent unaggressiveness that was a contrast to his fiery forerunner, John the Baptist who had an intense conviction that the new and long hoped-for era was imminent. Other considerations regarding Jesus' relation to eschatology could be pointed out, but this important problem is not our major consideration, even though quite pertinent.

7. Jesus as a Teacher

Jesus' work meant far more than what usually passes under the name of teaching, for he was not primarily concerned with giving information or training the intellect. Rall says, "Education is the giving of self and the training of the whole spirit of a man."[1] This implies that teaching is life-sharing. Phillips Brooks defined preaching as "truth through personality" and true teaching might have a similar definition. Church history indicates that the great leaders of the Christian Church (Wesley, Luther, Augustine, Paul, etc.) were not only reformers, campaigners, and preachers, but also teachers.

---

1. Rall, H.F., The Teachings of Jesus, p. 18

It is outside the scope of this thesis to present a detailed study of Jesus' method as a teacher, but certain of his characteristics as a teacher should be contributed to the theme in order to help in interpreting his words. "Jesus was not a professional religious official or teacher. He was an artisan, one who had quietly followed his trade in the small town of Nazareth until one day he began a public ministry to the whole of Galilee and to a certain extent to Judea."[1] His auditors were greatly impressed by his independence for it was in contrast to the professional theologians and acknowledged religious authorities. He "taught" them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." Jesus also was independent of the beliefs concerning the Messiah.

Although Jesus followed the Old Testament, he was independent and discriminating in his reference to it. "He chooses that which is congruous with his own spirit and message: not the legal and ceremonial, but the moral and spiritual. His quotations are mainly from the Psalms and prophetic books, and from books of prophetic spirit like Deuteronomy."[2] Most of the Messianic passages do not seem to have influenced him, especially those which tell of the glory of the Messiah and how he will destroy

---

1. Branscomb, H., "The Teachings of Jesus, p. 92
2. Rall, H.F., The Teachings of Jesus, p. 21

his foes. He was greatly influenced by a passage which, as far as is known, was not used by the Jewish scholars in referring to the coming Messiah, namely, the passage describing a suffering Messiah.[1]

Jesus' public ministry only lasted a few months, or at most a few years. In that short time, even though he didn't write anything, he taught in such a way as to transform human life and history since his time. He has been greatly misunderstood because men have not understood his way of teaching. He had no "system" of teaching. The ordinary teacher generally presents his teaching systematically - an orderly setting forth of ideas. Jesus did not follow this procedure but he taught in an informal way. He gave to men a revelation of God, but he never said, "Now I will teach about God and describe Him". In contrast, Jesus taught as the occasion demanded and his great messages were called forth by the need of his hearers, often being suggested by some incident of the way. Thus, his teaching was natural and not formal, and his purpose of preparing men for the Kingdom of God explains his method. He talked with them about the great questions of life, about God, about man and sin, about living daily, about sin, and about things to come. All his teaching was occasional as special questions arose and was incidental to his purpose of summoning

---

1. Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12

men to get ready for a new life. "His call was not to be a teacher but to bring his people intothe Kingdom of God."[1]

Jesus taught whenever he could find a convenient place and he did not regard it essential to have a crowd present. In fact, many of his greatest sayings, of which we have record, are addressed to small groups or to individuals. The Gospels give ample testimony of how Jesus availed himself of the opportunity of teaching in the Jewish synagogues. His method, therefore, is incidental to his purpose. His proclamation of the Kingdom involved necessary exhortation, learning, explanation and instruction. His subject was to help men live more abundantly. The truth that he cared about was truth that would help men to live better. He wanted to speak "to" men in everyday language, informally, and not to speak "at" them in a formal, logical systematized manner.

"Although Jesus' teaching is practical, it is not shallow; he deals with common needs and common duties, but he lifts them to the plane of the eternal. It is the common life in which he is interested: how to love and help folks, how to be a good neighbor, how to have peace and joy...."[2] This means that Jesus had to have a great

---

1. Branscomb, H., The Teachings of Jesus, p. 96
2. Rall, H.F., The Teachings of Jesus, p. 26

insight into human nature. He had to know men, their needs, their desires, their weaknesses, and their potentialities. As he had been reared in a normal home among common people, he had an excellent training and background to teach "ordinary" people. He knew what daily labor was. He knew the sorrows and burdens of common folks. "He knew their sins: their shallowness and selfishness, their love of wealth, their pride, their worry. He knew the nobler part that was in them, the higher possibilities that lay buried under sin."[1]

To appeal to his listeners, Jesus used picturesque language and did not mean that he should always be interpreted literally. To take his words literally is to sin against him. His picture-teaching makes his teaching simple and yet the picturesque language gives power to the teaching. His contrasts, paradoxes, parallelisms, and illustrations, appealed to his listeners and spiritual truths were made more real by picture-teaching. "He took the familiar things of common life, bird and beast, grain and weed and flower, salt and seed and candle, men at work and children at play; but these common things he made to speak to men of all the high truths of heaven and earth."[2] Thus, his teaching is simple and clear, yet

1. Rall, H.F., The Teachings of Jesus, p. 26
2. Rall, H.F., The Teachings of Jesus, p. 27

full of meaning. Single phrases have whole sermons in them and they leave pictures on the walls of one's memory.

The parable at the close of the Sermon on the Mount, the beatitudes, and the whole passage about the single heart and the single trust (Matthew 6:19-34) show how noble thoughts may be presented in poetic language. The first half of the seventh chapter of Matthew is entirely composed of passages in the Hebrew poetic form. Teaching by parable was a favorite method of teaching for Jesus. These parables were invented stories of that which might naturally happen and illustrated some spiritual meaning. Unfortunately, much injustice has been heaped upon Jesus by some interpreters who try to make every sentence and phrase in Jesus' parobolic teaching stand for a hidden truth.

Dr. Rall points out that there are three misuses made of Jesus' teaching. The first is that of allegorizing. Men try to find too much meaning in every word of Jesus and the result is that there is no limit except the imagination of the individual who reads into Jesus' words his own particular doctrine or system. Literalism, according to Rall, is a second misuse of Jesus' teaching. Vivid phrases were used by the Teacher to make an impression on his hearers. He often used the method of the poet and prophet which exaggerates for emphasis. This means

that the true interpreters of Jesus must try to discover his spirit rather than the exact meaning of literal words. The final fault which Rall finds with those who misuse Jesus' teaching is that they turn Jesus' words into a new system of laws or stamp him as a legalist. "It was not rules that Jesus came to bring, but life. Jesus' idea of religion was not a better set of laws, but a new spirit in the hearts of men."[1]

In the few preceding pages an attempt has been made to present some of the characteristics of Jesus as a teacher. Books have been written of Jesus as an observer of nature and his use of his world in his teaching. His personality, his poise, his intensity of spirit, his sincerity, his tenderness and sympathy, and his democratic spirit made him a master teacher. It must be remembered in considering the various characteristics of Jesus that we cannot reflect his whole spirit and attitude toward men and life. He possessed a certain spirit, a dynamic, which transcends a mere description of his "techniques", "characteristics", or even his words.

---

1. Rall, H.F., The Teachings of Jesus, p. 32

PART II

THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

1. Introdution

Today, just as in past centuries, there is an interest in Jesus' teaching regarding group character and conduct. In many cases Jesus and his teaching have been pressed into service by "social Gospel" advocates in a way that was out of harmony with the total temper of his mind. Social theories have been based upon single sentences of his teaching, and Jesus has received the gravest personal and historical injustice. We may not conclude, for example, that Jesus regarded poverty as a virtue by: "Blessed are ye poor: for yours is the Kingdom of God."[1] "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's,"[2] does not mean that Jesus' teaching advocates the separation of church and state, today.

The first part of this thesis has been primarily concerned with the historical background of the teachings of Jesus as found in the Sermon on the Mount. We now proceed to the major consideration and go to the actual

---

1. Luke 6:20 b
2. Mark 12:17

teaching seeking to discover the relationship between the personal message and any social message which Jesus had. The basic interest is whether Jesus was interested only in saving souls of individual men or whether he visioned a broader application of his teaching.

2. The Spirit of the Beatitudes

The Sermon on the Mount opens with the Beatitudes which have inspired multitudes through the ages. Harnach says: "Whenever there is a danger of obscurity as to what Jesus' teaching means, then we will turn again and again to the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. They contain his ethics and his religion, joined in one root and freed from all that is external and particularistic."[1] These brief descriptive sayings indicate the credentials of citizenship in the Kingdom of God and are a summary of the Christian life. They set forth the spirit of a Christian and should be considered together, for Jesus is setting forth one spirit, and not describing different classes of people.

The second half of the Beatitude group, especially concern man's relation to his fellow-men. The men of the

---

1. Harnach, Adolf, What is Christianity? p.74

Kingdom will be merciful. They will be peacemakers, not only peaceable themselves, but trying to spread peace and righteousness on earth. In fact, they will have such a passion for righteousness that they will not desist because of any cost to themselves. They will endure persecution for their convictions of righteousness.

It should be clear that the Beatitudes do lay stress on a humble, personal spirit, yearning for a closer fellowship with God. Our interest is whether or not there are social implications in the spirit which the Beatitudes exalt. If we focus our attention on "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy,"[1] we see that it is intimately related to that which precedes it. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness must have some outlet for the spiritual power which they have received through fellowship with God. However great our zeal for justice may be, it must not exclude the element of mercy. No doubt, Jesus saw things that showed people didnot appreciate the mercy of God. He implies that some people do not know how to appreciate gifts of mercy because they are not merciful themselves. They do not extend mercy. Davies interprets this in such a way as to show the immense social implications that

---

1. Matthew 5:7

may grow out of a merciful spirit. "The merciful are the men, women, and children who banish all feelings of revenge and ill-will out of their hearts and who seek to cultivate an attitude of love and sympathy toward all mankind, especially toward the disfranchised and dispossessed."[1]

Thus, although the stress is on a merciful, personal attitude, it is impossible to limit the attitude to a purely personal realm. "Because God is merciful to him, the righteous man is merciful to others, and because he is merciful he wins God's mercy."[2] God's mercy is at once cause and effect, and there is no limit to the social effects that a personal merciful attitude might have.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God,"[3] indicates that Jesus had in mind to commend and inculcate the spread of peace - all kinds of peace among men. The qualities described in the first six Beatitudes are the essential prerequisites of the peacemaker. The establishment of good-will, harmony, peace, and love in the home, church, community, nation

---

1. Davies, J.N., Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 961
2. Plummer, Alfred, Gospel According to St.Matthew, p.66
3. Matthew 5:9

and world calls for peacemakers, men who can organize and carry into practice the ideals which they hold. To such is given open access to the privileges of sonship in the family of God.

A peacemaker, according to the life and teaching of Jesus, is not the quiet, non-resistant, pious type of man. Jesus, no doubt, realized that in trying to make and construct peace, one may make a lot of trouble. A peacemaker may cause disputes and be imprisoned. If much work is done for peace, a "cross" may be the result. Peacemaking may begin in a man's heart, but an inner desire, an inner passion for peace, may spread and involve many social relationships. Jesus came to found a Kingdom of peace and peacemakers are spreading his sovereignity and the rule of God in the world. Individual composure and social harmony can be brought about by the concentration of all interests and forces on the achievement of the individual and social ideal as taught by Jesus, and by the realization, within one's self and among all, of God's principles of concord and cooperation through which alone true peace can be obtained.

The Beatitudes, therefore, even though they do emphasize the inner qualities of man have social implications. They are rooted and grounded in the love of God for the individual, however, in the Beatitudes blessed-

ness comes as a result of sharing socially such qualities as mercy and peace.

3. Jesus' Fulfilment and Enlargement of the Ancient Law

In the three following sections of this thesis a few exhibits will show how Jesus confirmed the ancient Jewish Law, transformed it, and abrogated it. Although he had a profound reverence for the Law, based upon a penetrating discernment of its spirit, he enlarged and fulfilled it. For him, the idea of God in the Law grew. What had been said was right but the Law needed to be developed and applied to life. Thus, Jesus was not a slave to the Old Testament, even though he respected it. He wanted to give people a religion to live by - a religion that supersedes, transcends, and exceeds the "letter" or the rule.

In the following three sections we find Jesus not re-enacting the Ten Commandments, but re-establishing the principles which underlay them. He took up and re-affirmed the essential ethical principles and religious ideas which the Hebrew law-givers had endeavored to formulate and the Hebrew prophets had endeavored to instill in the hearts of men. "Jesus had the Divine idea within himself, and needed no external criterion."[1]

---

1. Votaw, C.W., Hastings' Bible Dictionary, Extra Vol.p.24

"Jesus came in the way of nature to fulfil the Law as the flower fulfils the bud and the fruit fulfils the flower."[1] Thus, he shows the inner principles of law-abiding value and detaches the true essence of the Law from a degenerate tradition.

4. The Sermon on the Mount and Murder
Matthew 5:21-26

> "21 Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:22 but I say unto you, that everyone who is angry with his brother shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire. 23 If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, 24 leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.
> "25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art with him in the way; lest haply the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. 26 Verily I saw unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou have paid the last farthing."

In the above verses, Jesus takes a law of the Old Testament and enlarges it, refines it, and fulfills it. He implies that what has been said is good, but the seed needs to be cultivated so that it will grow and blossom forth into a religion which will transcend and supersede the religion of the Scribes and Pharisees. The Jews had

---

1. Wright, T.H., The Sermon on the Mount For Today, p.113

kept the letter of the precept as they had abstained from actual murder, but Jesus is stressing the wrong motive which underlies murder. He is concerned with the spirit of the Commandment, the hatred and anger which motivates the action. The Jews had allowed themselves to cherish contempt, hatred, and anger against others even though they had kept the Law. To Jesus, all feelings of anger and hate are sinful, even though they donot take effect in actions of violence.

Plummer points out that in verse 22, we have a climax in the penalties: "Those of the local court, those of the supreme court at Jerusalem (The Sanhedrin), and those of God's final judgment. We assume that there must be a similar climax in the offences, which may be expressed thus: unexpressed hatred, expressed contempt, and expressed abuse."[1] Following the comment of Jesus on the law of murder, two illustrations are added to stress the importance of good-will and the fostering of right relations with men. Verses 23,24 especially concern harmonious relations between ourselves and our fellows. No act of worship, not even the giving of offerings to God, was acceptable to Him when the worshiper

---

1. Plummer, Alfred, The Gospel According to St.Matthew, p.78

cherished ill-will against others. Brotherhood is a religious obligation.

Davies interprets verses 25,26 as teaching the "importance of paying one's debts at the right time,"[1] in order to secure the welfare of society. "Everything that occasions ill-will, anger, misunderstanding must be avoided because they are inimical to the best interests, of the religious and social life as well as to the highest development of our own personality."[2] The spirit that excludes hatred and anger will not only be justified in itself, but will make murder impossible. This leads us to see many social implications. In this teaching of brotherly reconciliation, Jesus is asking what attitude will be taken towards enemies by those who would have an opportunity to harm. He is asking what value other lives, especially those whom you dislike, have in your estimation. "Thou shalt not kill" as reinterpreted by Jesus stresses that every man has a right to live. Martin Luther in his short Catechism in interpreting this commandement says: "We are to fear and love God, that we do our neighbor no harm nor injury in his body, but help and further him in all bodily necessities."[3]

---

1. Davies, J.Newton, Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 963
2. Ibid
3. Luther, Martin, Primary Works, Henry Wace editor, p.7

In Luther's greater Catechism he says: "We are not to injure any one by word or deed; further, we are not to use our tongue to advise or to counsel murder. Besides which we are not to use, or to permit others to use, any means of giving offence."[1]

Jesus' teaching of the preciousness of a single human soul was a basic principle of his religion. Failure to respect personality, whether of ourselves or others, is the basis for social sin, and the cause of most crimes of social injustice", says Fiske.[2] Murder with a gun is pleasant compared with some other ways in which human life is stiffled and killed. Men in their desire for profit have exploited women and children making them work under deadly conditions. Manufacturers have misrepresented foods and drugs causing the deaths of innocent victims. Thousands of illustrations could be given of how men, women, and children have been robbed of their inner lives, their souls, by slow methods.

Loyalty to Jesus' interpretation of "Thou shalt not kill" implies that we treat all men, women, and children as human personalities, sons of God, brothers of men, not as mere pieces of machinery or instruments of war. "Were

---

1. Luther, Martin, Primary Works, Henry Wace editor, p.7
2. Fiske, Walter A., A Study of Jesus' Own Religion, p.120

one to select the special contribution which Jesus of Nazareth himself has made and is making to man's thought, one could do no better than to call him the champion of personality....Whether one is really a Christian or not depends on whether one accepts or rejects Jesus' attitude toward personality."[1] Jesus was interested in the welfare of every human being.

The principle of reverence for human personality underlies social advance in every field today. Jesus did not discuss the problems of industry, war, politics, education, the position of women, the rights of children as we see the problems today. However, his principle of respect for life and personality is eternally valid. Democracy is one great expression of it, for a good democracy is dependent upon the worth of man. World peace is another conclusion drawn from it; for war may spring from the greeds and hates of national governments, and sacrifices the common man. War treats men as hardly of equal worth with the beasts of the field and is the greatest scorner of human values the w rld has ever seen. War isn't terrible simply for the men killed on the battle field. That is a small cost compared with the total cost. "There

---

1. Fosdick, Harry E., As I See Religion, p. 41 f

is the harvest of the crippled, the orphaned, the widowed; the decreased birth rate, the increased death rate, even at home; the terrible growth of tuberculosis, and in some countries of typhus and cholera."[1] Sexual immorality grows and morals decline. Crime increases during war time. Family life suffers and standards of living fall. Social betterment, culture, education and all of those values that have made civilization better are scorned by the war system. All of these tragedies of war are condemned by Jesus' reinterpretation of "Thou shalt not kill", and his respect for personality.

The movement for social and industrial justice rests upon the principle of how much human life is valued. Have workers a fair share of what is brought forth by their labor? Are workers decently housed and properly fed? Is there work for the man that wants it? Are children rightly born into the world and rightly trained for life? Only one thing is sacred - not property, profit, state, church, school, but LIFE.

5. The Sermon on the Mount and Chastity, Marriage and Divorce

In the society of Jesus' day, as in our modern social order, the health of society rests on the welfare of

---

1. Rall, H.F., Teachings of Jesus, p. 125

the home. Rauschenbusch says: "The family is the structural cell of the social organism. In it lives the power of propagation and renewal of life. It is the foundation of morality, the chief educational institution, and the source of nearly all the real contentment among men."[1] We may consider that monogamy has been and is one of the chief corner-stones in the highest civilizations which the world has known.

If Jesus had said nothing on the subject of the family, the general principles which he laid down and his whole attitude and spirit toward men, women, and children would have sufficed to guide us into right views concerning chastity, marriage, and divorce. For example, the Golden Rule, carefully applied, would help to solve some of the chief problems of the home. In the Sermon on the Mount, however, Matthew records some of Jesus' guiding principles for the relationship of men and women. Although the Sermon is not, and does not profess to be a compendium of Jesus' complete message, we find that in a few statements he transcended ecclesiastical and social rules by exalting a certain spirit, attitude, and motive which takes precedence over mere sex ethics.

---

1. Rauschenbusch, Walter, Christianity and the Social Crisis, p. 271

> "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in the heart." Matthew 5:27,28

These two verses concerning "adultery of the heart" again illustrate Jesus emphasis that a commandment, rule, or law can be of no help unless men and women are in right relationship with each other. Jesus is not trying to replace the seventh commandment (Ex.20:14: Dt.5:18) which forbade adultery. That old commandment together with the tenth commandment (Ex.20:17; Dt. 5:21) which forbade a man to desire another's wife had contributed much towards the peace and purity of the home. Jesus, however, fulfills and expands these old commandments by forbidding a man to look with lustful eyes upon a woman. Votaw points out that Jesus' demand exceeds that of the Old Testament in two ways: "It insists not only upon abstention from the act, but upon the repression of all wrong thought and desire...it forbids impure thought and desires on the part of any one."[1] To abstain from even wishing to possess one's neighbour's wife is far from being enough. To lust after her, or any woman, is a breach of the commandment.

---

1. Votaw, C.W., Hastings' Bible Dictionary, Extra Vol. p.26

In setting up this principle of social purity, Jesus undoubtedly, had in mind the whole society in which this ideal must be realized. It would be contrary to Jesus' method and purpose to limit his teaching to what a married man should do and think. Social purity is an obligation of both the married and unmarried, and it was a penetrating insight on the part of Jesus to teach that adultery must be committed in the mind before it can be committed in action. This is one of Jesus' great contributions to ethics. The whole emphasis was placed on the inner state of mind as he realized that whatever evil a man nursed in his imagination would come out in his actions, possibly not in the overt act, but in some form that would be equally poisonous to society.

Naturally, that which causes the impure thought would be condemned by Jesus. There must be some roots for adulterous thought. Dr. Borden Parker Bowne used to frequently say, "People don't live in the slums, but slums live in people."[1] The same principle is found here. The lustful glance, the impure desire, these sins against woman, self, and God have often been the result of suggestive books, pictures, movies, stories, and stage performances. The social implications are many when we consider some of the causes for "adultery of the heart". Rall says: "The terrible evil of commercial prostitution is being curbed;

1. Dean A.C.Knudson of Boston University quotes this statement of Bowne's

but the great problem of the social evil is in the hearts of men."[1] Jesus' teaching for today implies stern condemnation upon all who find amusement in reading literature whose chief attraction is in its morbid appeal to the sex instinct.

This principle does not imply a prudish attitude toward all plainess of speech. Some of the plainest novels are very moral. Tolstoi's Resurrection males one shudder with horror at the impurity while much of our fiction and drama exalts free love and encourages sensual desire and coveting.

Jesus had thought about the temptations of the flesh as he was a normal human man, and he wanted all the natural appetites, including those which are deepest in the nature and most essential to it, to be controled by the rational and moral elements of life. His appeal was that the higher values should never be sacrificed for the lower impulses of life. Desire is natural to man, yet man must respect the personality of hi self, others, and God. "The Law and the public conscience can only judge overt acts, and their jurisdiction soon reaches its limits, but the inward judgment searches the deep places of spirit and motive...

---

1. Rall, H.F., The Teachings of Jesus, p. 45

Jesus was thinking of the beauty and peace of inward purity. But he has also to contemplate the ugliness and torment of inward impurity."[1]

> "And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not thy whole body go into hell." Matthew 5:29, 30.

Some scholars regard the preceding verses as extraneous matter in the Sermon. At any rate, the meaning is quite clear even though the words are figurative and hyperbolical. Purity, both personal and social, is so good and impurity is so disastrous, that to gain the one and to avoid the other, no sacrifice is too great. Man must struggle to master his lower nature by the supremacy of his higher, better self. "Until a man brings his body into subjection to his spirit, he fails both individually and socially of what God requires of him."[2]

> "It was said also, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery." Matthew 5:31,32

The Markan parallel (Mark 10:11) does not have the exceptive clause "saving for the cause of fornication." The

---

1. Wright, T.H., The Sermon on the Mount for Today, p.133
2. Votaw, C.W., Hastings' Bible Dictionary, Extra Vol. p.27

Jewish school led by Shammai granted divorce on the ground of adultery alone, and the more lax school of Hillel permitted divorce on any pretext which the husband might offer. Two schools arose in the early church, one which made the words of Jesus absolute and the other which permitted the exception. Mark and Luke represent the first, while Matthew supports the second. Scholars have differed much over this question. Bishop McConnell well states the problem: "While Jesus laid down principles for all time, he never sought to give them application beyond his own time. Take the one instance in which Jesus is supposed by many to have stated a concrete law - that concerning marriage and divorce. Three questions forthwith arise: first, did Jesus utter what is attributed to him? Second, if he did, was he sanctioning the law of Moses about divorce as having a limited value and, by implication other laws as having value in spite of their inadequacy as final statements? Third, what did Jesus mean by saying that men were not to put asunder what God had joined?"[1] It can be seen that any one of these questions can start almost an endless debate, and it is fortunate that we do not have more New Testament utterances of Jesus which may be interpreted by some people as specific duties or laws.

Divorce was a subject of discussion in Jesus' day and it was therefore a matter of lively interest what attitude towards divorce would be assumed by Jesus who was indepen-

1. McConnell, F.J., Christianity and Coercion, p.12

dent of both Hillel and Shammai. In the Sermon on the Mount we find that divorce is inconceivable from an ideal standpoint. If we accept the modification clause, Jesus' teaching becomes similar to that of the stricter school of Jewish interpreters. "In other words, Christ here assumes that divorce must follow adultery, and what he is here prohibiting is not such divorce, which he assumes a necessity, but divorce and consequent re-marriage on any other grounds.[1] In view of these problems, we may suppose that Jesus taught that marriage ought to be an indissoluble bond, yet, human nature and society being what they are, divorce was a necessary and expedient consequence of the sin of adultery.

Allen gives a plausible reason for the insertion of the exceptive clause in verse 32. He believes that in view of the other features of Matthew's gospel, it is probable that the editor was a Jewish Christian who has here Jadaized Jesus' teaching. "Just as he has so arranged 5:16-20 as to represent Christ's attitude to the Law to be that of the Rabbinical Jews, who regarded every letter of the Law as permanently valid, so here he has so shaped Christ's teaching about divorce as to make it consistent

---

1. Allen, W.C., Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, Vol.1,p.484

with the permanent authority of the Pentateuch, and harmonious with the stricter school of Jewish theologians."[1]

The "doctors" disagree over the exact interpretation of the records, but when we see these teachings of Jesus on chastity, marriage, and divorce, in the light of the total temper of Jesus' life and teachings, we can better interpret them. Jesus in these teachings is dealing with the principles and the ideal of marriage rather than enacting legal laws. In such intimate affairs, rules of an iron cast are much out of place, and are contrary to his spirit. The treatment of his words as marriage "legislation" is a mistake. He simply establishes the ideal of marriage as a perfect, permanent union in body and spirit, and urges his followers to strive for the ideal. The implication is that the essential ideal of all true married life is to give all your effort, patience, wisdom, and self-sacrifice to make the marriage what God meant it to be.

"Jesus did not enter into the casuistry of the matter, but fixed the principle. How far in actual ecclesiastic or civil legislation at any given period or place, the ideal can be practically formulated and demanded, he left for the decision of those upon whom the administration of

---

1. Allen, W.C., Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, Vol.1, p.484

such matters devolved. Marriage and divorce regulations, upon which the welfare of society so largely depends, must embody the Divine ideal to the fullest extent made possible by the stage of spiritual, moral, and social progress concerned."[1] This is the ideal. We should not deny the ideal nor fail to lead others toward it, even if we don't live up to it. We dare not preach or teach just what we have attained. We know that Jesus would have patience with a weakling along these problems if the heart was right, and there was a sincere desire to improve.

Domestic instability, it is observed, tends in a most startling way to become an epidemic social disease. The results cannot be measured, but we do know that an unbelievable proportion of the young men and women in our reformatories are children of divorced parents. Commercial prostitution, the high divorce statistics, etc., show that we are falling short of the ideal standard but however low the current conception of marriage may be, or whatever freedom the civic laws may permit, the standard of Christ remains before his followers. Divorce is a confession of complete failure to attain Jesus' idea. Divorce can, in certain instances, be justified on the grounds that it is better to be divorced than to fall farther

---

1. Votaw, C.W., Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, Extra Vol. p. 28

short of other ideals of Jesus. The highest degree of effort, endurance, patience, and self sacrifice are to be used to accomplish the permanence and perfection of a marriage when undertaken. Such an ideal precedes the Kingdom of God.

6. The Sermon on the Mount and Non-resistance
Matthew 5:38-42

"38 Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth 39 but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. 41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."

The term "non-resistance" is applied to the refusal to use force sometimes only in war, sometimes under any circumstances. These two positions are often confused and are not identical. One of the origins of the term and idea is in the above account in the Sermon where Christ is reported to have said not to resist evil. The main arguments in favor of the view that it is wrong to appeal to force under any circumstances come from such sayings of Jesus regarding forgiveness and the principle of love. In studying the teachings of Jesus, however, we need to be constantly reminded that it is absolutely impossible to arrive at the true meaning of any passage in the Bible if it is taken in isolation. The Sermon must be interpreted in the light of the life and teaching of Jesus as a whole.

In the New Testament, it is clear that force or coercion of some kind forms an important element in God's dealings with men. Bishop McConnell well describes Jesus' environment: "Jesus made use of a state of society which had resulted from coercion. He lived in the Roman Empire, trod roads and streets built by Rome, accepted the protection of Roman laws, and even told his disciples to render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's."[1] Whatever we may or may not think of Rome, it should be quite clear that she was not built by persuasive methods alone. "She was one of the greatest mistresses of coercion the world has ever known and physical coercion at that."[2]

Jesus' whole life is one constant resistance to evil and he was as vigorous as an Old Testament prophet in his fight against injustice and hypocrisy. Kent translates the key word in the foregoing scripture not "resist" but "resent".[3] He claims that Jesus is here advocating non-resentment rather than non-resistance, and this interpretation is more in harmony with Jesus' personal practice and teaching. Jesus' words which have been construed as forbiding resistance or the use of force do not bear that

---

1. McConnell, F.J., Christianity and Coercion, p.11
2. Ibid
3. Scott, E.F., Ethical Teachings of Jesus, p.71

larger interpretation for Jesus was forbiding retaliation. He was saying, when wrong is done to your own person or your society; endure the evil done to you and overcome it with good. It is not said that you must stand by when you see wrong inflicted on others, or that force must not be used in the necessary maintenance of law. Scott points out that "in a number of parables the punishment of evil-doers is noted with manifest approval. On one occasion, Jesus himself is described as exercising violence towards the traffickers who had profaned the Temple."[1] Quite often we see Jesus denouncing oppressors and hypocrites and one who could so speak would not hold back on a just occasion from corresponding deeds. He never had an attitude of passive-toleration of wrong.

Modern pacifists are certainly not following the principles of Jesus when they refuse to use compulsion in any situation or manner. Civil government requires force to accomplish its end, to protect citizens against fire, crime, unsanitary conditions, disease, and social forces which destroy the highest ideals of civilization. To take the position that force under all conditions is wrong, leads to philosophical anarchy. It would deny the right of society to send policemen to take in hand a drunken man who was running amuck. It would even deny the right of

---

1. Scott, E.F., Ethical Teachings of Jesus, p. 71

a mother to coerce a silly child about to run into his own destruction. In the case of nations, "It is not thinkable that we shall long acquiesce in any arrangement which leaves good men at the mercy of evil men. If the evil men kill off the good men, they kill off more than their bodies - they kill off also the possibility of putting into effect the ideals for which the good stand."[1] Jesus certainly did not intend that a man should not use force motivated by a spirit of love and helpfulness, if necessary to save his nation, his community, his family, from gross outrage.

Jesus is saying in the specific passage under discussion that in case of being offended, the important thing is how to care for the offender. He urges that the right thing be done for him who has done the wrong. One should, in a reasonable spirit, without resentment, measure the significance of an angry blow and deal with it accordingly. The spirit of revenge is to be overcome. "The best way to quiet anger is not to be angry in return, but to meet anger with cool self-control and to remove the anger by removing any possible cause for it."[2] We observe that Jesus' way of meeting insult and injury was quite different from revengeful. Force to him was love in action and his life, teaching, and spirit bears out that retaliation in

1. McConnell, J.J., Christianity and Coercion, p. 13
2. Kent, C.F., Jesus' Principles of Living, p. 109

a revengeful way defeats its own purpose and merely prolongs a fight.

If we follow Matthew 5:38-42 literally, we dehumanize Jesus. Giving your overcoat to the thief who stole your coat and going the extra mile are here forceful acts of kindness for the benefit of the offender but we can't follow the teaching literally in every such case and be following the principles of the Teacher. Sometimes it is absolutely wrong to give to those who ask. It is a sin against a beggar or a child in certain circumstances to give them what they ask for. If you freely give meals away to unemployed, it is quite possible that you can sin against the unemployed, society, and God by encouraging them to become permanently on a dole or trying to get something for nothing. It is necessary to discipline people because you love them. In this scriptural passage, non-resistance is not the theme - the idea is deeper - the attitude which an injured person takes against his violater.

"If an act of non-resistance, instead of converting merely encourages the wrong-doer, obvious harm is done. To yield to blackmail in any form or, it may be, to refuse to prosecute a criminal will involve a mischief to society at large which will outweigh the good done. The degree to which non-resistance may rightly be carried when one's own personal interests and safety alone are directly

involved must be a matter for the individual conscience to decide according to the circumstances of each case."[1] In modern civilized nations, it is recognized that a man who has been injured must not retaliate for himself. The right of private revenge throws the door open to all kinds of evil and injustice. The ideal which Jesus teaches is that when a man has suffered injustice, he is not only to refrain from trying to "get even" or avenge, but to answer the injury with some positive benefit in a spirit of love and helpfulness to the offender.

The case of war, where national interests are concerned follows this principle. Responsible rulers of a state are trustees, not only for the nation as a whole, but for future generations. Sometimes, unfortunately, force must be used to protect its own members. War is wrong and out of harmony with the teachings of Jesus, but the appeal to war, like our existing competive social system, has its roots deep in a past which the individual inherits and for which he is only partially responsible. We can and should modify the future, but at any given moment we have to do the best under the actual circumstances in which we find ourselves. The case is a alogous to that of one who, in a country where law and police do not exist, is

---

1. Emmet, C.W., Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, p.537, Vol.X

forced to take into his own hands the defense of the life and property of his family and his society.

This passage from the Sermon thus rests on spirit and relationship with other men, other communities, and other nations. To love a man, to love a society, it is sometimes necessary to discipline by the use of force under the control of love. Before advances can be made in peace, in law, in inudstrial conditions, in education, and in religion, it is necessary for coercion (intellectual, social, physical) to be used. The important issue is the spirit, motive, and disposition which is behind the coercion for better adjustments and relationships between men and nations.

7. The Sermon on the Mount and Material Possessions

Jesus was greatly concerned with the attitude of men towards material possessions. He did not propound an economic system, yet he stressed certain religio-ethical principles that are as vital today as they were when first advanced, for his teaching seems to represent a certain spirit and relationship which should exist between man and things.

There are a number of reasons why Jesus would teach concerning the attitude which we should have toward possessions. Wealth was the chief ambition of the majority of men in his day. Practically all the men

to whom Jesus appealed were in quest of that which represented material comfort for themselves and their dependents. His followers included farmers, industrious fishermen, enterprising merchants, and grafting tax collectors and even the Pharisees, pious as they were, were eager to acquire wealth. The stress on materialism would be one of the chief barriers to the acceptance of his message.

The Sermon on the Mount does not include all of Jesus' teaching concerning the relationship of men to things. Certain verses in the Sermon radiate only part of the attitude which Jesus stressed in regard to possessions. Therefore, after dealing with some of the specific passages from the Sermon, we shall find it necessary to refer to passages outside the Sermon which help represent the total temper of his life and thought.

Matthew 6:19-34 sets forth the ideal that the Kingdom of God will be a result of devotion to spiritual things. Jesus is not ignoring material things but his stress is that they be used only in such manner as will be for the greatest good of humanity. The teaching is developed in three sections, each section dealing with an important phase (a) the aim of life must be spiritual, (b) one's interests must be coordinated, (c) values must be seen in their proper relationship.

"19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also." Matt. 6:19,20,21

The above passage does not forbid one from gathering around his life objects of interest and value which appeal to his physical, intellectual, and artistic nature. Today, a follower of Jesus may certainly treasure such possessions as books, pictures, works of art of all kinds, and things of historical and practical worth. Jesus, however, is here asking how and why one values possessions. To accumulate wealth for its own sake, for selfish purposes, or to minister to pride is condemned by Jesus. Wealth and possessions for their own sake, as ends in themselves, are merely temporal. In contrast to earthly wealth, Jesus exalts his followers to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven. His concern was with the basic spirit of man and his demand was that spiritual treasures should be foremost in man's evaluations. Material wealth is secondary to spiritual wealth, according to Jesus and should never be an end in itself. Of course, spiritual possessions may be a part of material things and occupations. Today, as in the past, "The accumulation of material goods, when not carried on by dishonesty, oppression, or disregard of others needs and rights, may

minister to the highest welfare of one's fellow-men."[1]

> "22 The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness! 24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matthew 6:22-24

Jesus in the above is saying that all of our attention must be focused on seeing God. The setting of one's heart on earthly treasures obscures one's spiritual vision. When Jesus speaks of "a single eye" and "an evil eye" he is employing the technical phraseology of ancient ophthalmy. "The eye was termed of old 'the light of the body' and 'the window of the soul' since the body is the chamber of the soul, and without a window the soul would sit in darkness."[2] Spiritual discernment must be kept clear. Mammon was the common word, in the Aramaic, for riches. In this scripture, it is almost personified as a rival diety to God. Jesus has in mind the spirit which makes riches the central object of life.

Jesus well recognizes that the spirit which is eternally seeking material possessions can degrade human life when it is given free control of it. We cannot exaggerate the

---

1. Votaw, C.W., Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, p.40
2. Smith, David, Commentary on the Four Gospels (Matthew) p.122

brutalities of the materialistic spirit in the history of today. "Riches unmoralized, unspiritualized, can change the wholesome nature of honest, happy industry of hand and brain into a cause of human hostility."[1] A nation may gain much land, much increase of national wealth, and it may be greatly acclaimed for its successes and renown, but at the same time, it may lose its ideals and respect for the individual personality of its members.

Serving God rather than Mammon means, therefore, that everything must be made subordinate and contributory to the attainment of righteousness and the realization of the Kingdom. "It is impossible to divide one's efforts and strive for spiritual goods part of the time and earthly goods the other part. Special moments of lofty aspiration, of unselfishness, of generosity come to almost everyone; but in Jesus thought these things will become habitual and supreme in the true Christian."[2]

> 25 Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? 26 Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? 28 And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: 29 yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

---

1. Wright, T.H., The Sermon on the Mount for Today, p.225
2. Votaw, C.W., Hastings' Bible Dictionary, p. 40

30 But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? 31 Be not anxious saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Be not anxious therefore for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Matthew 6:25-34

Matthew here records an explicit statement of Jesus regarding material necessities, food, clothing, shelter, and material means for mental and spiritual growth. He is giving an answer to a problem of the ages - must not life be a struggle for earthly, transient things in order to live? His solution urges men to trust in God's care and not be overly-anxious about bodily needs for coveting and hoarding are due to a lack of trust in God and worship of Mammon. It should be carefully noted that Jesus' "Be not anxious" (vv. 25,31,34) does not forbid foresight and planning, rather it forbids the nervous anxiousness about securing physical needs. His emphasis is on the spiritual life which he knows will be distorted if men are primarily interested in materialism. God gaves us life and formed our bodies. If He took this first step, surely His interest in us will continue, according to Jesus. We can't determine our stature or the length of our lives, and no matter how we may worry and fret about such matters it does no good. As we trust God for our

body and life, let us trust Him for food and clothing. Votaw states: "It is that God knows these needs of men, and wills to provide for them (v. 32f): men should depend upon and trust Him for those things necessary to life. If the Heavenly Father cares for the birds and the flowers, He will certainly care for His higher human creatures. Men therefore, must not be anxious about these things; they must live trustingly for today, leaving tomorrow to God (34)."[1] Jesus seems to realize that prudential foresight may too often pass into an attitude of regarding money as an end in itself.

Plummer says: "We can count seven arguments against over anxiety about providing for the future. 1. There are more important things to think about. 2. Look at the birds, whom God feeds. 3. Life cannot be prolonged beyond the allotted time. 4. Look at the flowers, whom God clothes. 5. This over-anxiety is heathenish. 6. God knows what your needs are. 7. Sufficient to each day is its evil. Sufficient, but not excessive."[2]

Common sense, and other teaching of Jesus, supplies the interpretation that Jesus contemplates labour, prudence,

---

1. Votaw, C.W., Hastings' Bible Dictionary, Extra Vol. p.40
2. Plummer, Alfred, Gospel According to St. Matthew, p.109

and forethought for material necessities and comforts. We are not to live by a hand-to-mouth existence. This would be totally out of harmony with the message of Jesus. He is simply saying that God provides needs for men, not the things themselves without effort on man's part, but the way by which man may secure what he needs for abundant living. Jesus is concerned with the attitude and approach of man towards these material possessions. He desires that men should be free from distraction and too much anxiety about material things. We are to trust God for material necessities, that means that we trust God that we may have the ability to use the abilities, talents, and possessions which he has given to us.

Many times in history there have been uprisings against the wealth-holding classes in which appeal was made to the plain words of Jesus. Too often, Jesus has been held responsible for teaching concerning wealth and possessions which would be entirely foreign to him. We have discussed some of the specific teachings of Jesus in regard to possessions as recorded in the Sermon. However, these verses are a small part of the spirit which must motivate and transcend any economic system. Jesus was anxious that his followers should have a balanced, poised, and well-proportioned life and to more fully understand his spirit or attitude toward possessions, we must briefly refer to passages outside the Sermon.

Jesus taught that the possession of surplus material goods is a spiritual handicap. Wealthy men are surrounded with temptations. The love of wealth easily becomes an absorbing slavery which turns the heart to gold. While he did not say that it was impossible for a rich man to retain his wealth and still be a good man, he did say that "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Matthew 19:24. He means that it is very hard to get wealthy men to talk on finer things such as self-denial, sacrifice, thoughtfulness, and respect for persons and God. His statement was extreme, but he did make an impression! Today, as in the past, "It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven". Matthew 19:23

Mark 10:17-22 records the story of the Rich Young Ruler, whom Jesus advised to get out from under the burden of his gold which was distorting his spiritual life. His wealth was a hindrance to his soul, yet Jesus did not request Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2f) to give up his wealth. Here, a penitent publican, by restoring his graft four-fold, gives ample proof that the money-god no longer rules him. His religion had conquered his avarice.

To teach his friends the folly of trusting in wealth for happiness, he told them the story of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:15-21). Here, the man invested in barns and made no spiritual investments. His wealth was hoarded

for his own selfish comfort. "For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" Matthew 16:26. Wealth was a servant rather than a master. Rauschenbusch points out some of the ways in which men seek gains in wealth. "Marriages are arranged for it. Politics is run for it. Wars are begun for it. Creative artistic and intellectual impulses are shouldered aside, fall asleep, or die of inaction."[1]

The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-29) teaches that wealth should be made useful on earth and the spiritual riches of character will be made permanent. Jesus, in this parable scores the unprofitable servant who merely hoards his talent, keeping it safe, but useless, and then praises the wise investments of the thrifty stewards who made their money useful. Rauschenbusch claims that "Property is intended to secure freedom of action and self-development; in fact, it often chains men and clips their wings."[2] This is what Jesus calls the "deceitfulness of riches" in Matthew 13:22.

In the foregoing pages, an attempt has been made to reflect certain elements in the spirit of Jesus toward

---

1. Rauschenbusch, Walter, Social Principles of Jesus, p.125
2. Ibid.

wealth. Jesus was anxious that men should see life's values in proper perspective and in proper relationship. He wanted individuals to have a scale of values in which wholesome things, permanent character possessions, took precedence. His desire was that men should use the material things of life to develop fruitful and abundant living. Inward possessions, human affections, and sympathies, directed toward God and man are to come first if we accept Jesus' evaluation of life.

It is for us to discover from time to time how the changing conditions of society affects the sharing of the world's material possessions. Jesus has no set program to offer either in the Sermon or elsewhere. He only demands that in our use of possessions, we be guided by love and respect for man and God.

8. The Golden Rule as a Social Spirit

"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets." Matthew 7:12

The social spirit of the Sermon on the Mount is expressed in the Golden Rule which stresses right relationship and right adjustment to other people. Jesus' followers are to treat others as they would like to be treated. The principle sounds very simple, but individuals and groups find that it is an ideal which is almost beyond attainment in society as we find it today. If we knew nothing else about Jesus' social spirit than this fundamental principle

of the infinite worth of persons, the faith of Jesus' followers should be able to construct a Christian society. The Golden Rule is a great social sentence. In our modern changing economic order, social relationships could be revolutionized by it. An evaluation of human beings tends towards fellowship which is the basis of all social ethics, and the Golden Rule has a potential power greater than the world has ever realized or ever fully tried. To the extent that Christians today are failing to live up to this ideal, in family life, in business, politics and world friendship, to that degree its friendship is below par and its religion is discounted. The Golden Rule and the Law of Love stand as the heart of Jesus' religion. Let us be more specific and indicate some of the ways that this principle of right relationship may be applied today.

One of the most radical things Jesus ever did was to attack the man-made system of one-sided family life in which the woman had no rights. He challenged the idea that man could mistreat women in sexual, marriage, and family relationships. He set up a higher ideal of the marriage relations than the people of his day had ever imagined for he stood for a life-long, monogamus relationship involving a fusion of personalities and interests. Today, we faill far short of the spirit of the Golden Rule in men and women relationships.

In no realm of human relations is the Golden Rule more constantly tested or more grieviously needed than in the field of industry and the goods of life. We find Jesus constantly emphasizing that life is more than property. Love, confidence, kindness, and right attitudes must reach out into business relations and dominate human decisions if the Golden Rule is to be practiced. Inequality in industry and in the distribution of the world's goods will never be bettered until such a spirit as the Golden Rule predominates. It is the basis of good sportsmanship in business.

As Dr. Fiske says: "We do not expect to find Jesus technically informed about the details of modern merchandising, or coal-mining, nor the making of silk, steel, or cotton cloth,"[1] but his principle or spirit enunciated in the Golden Rule does have the dynamic to humanize industry. If his spirit does not make for peace in the long human struggles, strikes, bitterness, hatreds, and wars will continue to the end. Jesus and his law of love and the Golden Rule kept within the sphere of fundamental principles. This is as far as religion can go. It must leave details of technical problems to the specialists. The Golden Rule, then, stands for the full recognition of

---

1. Fiske, Walter, A Study of Jesus' Own Religion, p. 265

the rights of all persons involved in business relationships and attempts to personalize the relationships.

There are no limits to the jurisdiction of the Golden Rule in the realm of national and international relationships. In the light of Jesus, there can be no superstate for the Christian state is but a large family, a wider brotherhood, whose mutual good-will is expressed by the Golden Rule. A truly christian nation would be ready to share its blessings and its knowledge with other nations. It is in the observance of the Golden Rule that "we establish schools in other lands, in which we teach not only the Bible and theology, but the physical sciences, medicine, history, political economy, and political science."[1]

Thus, although the Golden Rule is stated in such a way as to suggest a personal attitude, the attitude involves tremendous social responsibilities. It involves society to the widest extent and today there is great need for us to train ourselves to apply the Golden Rule positively and constructively.

9. The Sermon on the Mount and the Kingdom of God

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, definite references are made to the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of

---

1. Robinson, B.W., Sayings of Jesus, p. 241

Heaven.[1] These few direct references cannot give us Jesus' conception of the Kingdom for we have to understand his whole life, teachings, and spirit to properly interpret his conception. His hope for the Kingdom involves a new social ideal, but that ideal must be carefully interpreted. Some over-zealous Christian sociologists have emphasized that Jesus was above all a social reformer. They say that the thought of the Kingdom was not in relation to the inward life, but as the perfected society of the future. Jesus is thus classed among reformers who have tried to build up ideal social structures by definite programs and philosophies. Thus, it has been over-stressed that Jesus' chief hope was for a better external world in the future to be known as the Kingdom of God and his words have been made a counsel of social perfection rather than spiritual motive-power. No one is reported to have asked Jesus what he meant by the Kingdom of God and he never felt called upon to declare in what sense he used the term. Even though he nowhere systematically defined what he meant by the term, the important factor is the meaning that he puts into it by his life.

The whole Sermon on the Mount with its many personal

1. Matthew V:3,10,19,21; VI:10,33; VII:21

and social implications is merely a part of Jesus' Kingdom ideal. In the Sermon the credentials, significance, and responsibilities of citizens of the Kingdom are taught and implied. The Kingdom is the main emphasis of Jesus and includes his whole message. Biblical scholars have differed and do differ today in their conclusions as to the meaning of the Kingdom. It is interpreted as a definitely organized body or society; as present and as future; as static and as growing; as belonging to this world and as belonging to another world; as a gift and as a goal to be acquired; as eschatalogical and as apocalyptic, etc.

The writer is convinced by a study of the complete Synoptic records that the idea of the Kingdom which practically substitutes the church for the Kingdom is wrong. The Kingdom of God according to Jesus is not a matter of external rule or of outward organization of any kind. It is not purely inward and individual. It is not setting off a little section of the world and calling it spiritual while the great activities and interests of business and state are put aside as secular. Rall well states: "The word 'kingdom may have one of two meanings, either the rule of the monarch or the realm over which he reigns. The latter is the more common meaning, but the former is the meaning of Jesus."[1]

1. Rall, H.F., The Teachings of Jesus, p. 146

By the Kingdom, Jesus meant the rule of God. "Thy Kingdom come" and "Thy will be done"[1] have the same meaning for esus. According to personalistic philosophy, the rulership of God means both the external and absolute rule of the material world and the rule of the spirit of individual persons. In persons, God may rule only as men know His will and atte pt to carry out His will in their lives. "With Jesus the doing of the will of God is the very essence of the Kingdom....The whole sermon on the Mount is Jesus' call to a higher righteousness of life and that righteousness is simply the rule of the Spirit of God."[2] Without such righteousness men cannot see the Kingdom (Matthew 5:20) and the test of one's citizenship in the Kingdom according to the Sermon is whether a man is actually doing the will of God, whether his life is showing fruits of righteousness (Matthew 7:15-23). Matthew 6:33,32 and 5:29,30 indicate part of Jesus' attitude. Here, Jesus says that the Kingdom must stand first in men's desires. It must be the only master of life, and no possessions, not even the right hand or the right eye, are more important than seeking citizenship in the Kingdom.

---

1. Matthew 6:10
2. Rall, H.F., The Teachings of Jesus, p. 154

Men are to work for the Kingdom, not to sit and wait for it. The Kingdom demands eager desire, the hunger and thirst for righteousness, and men are to seek it with the determination which men have in taking a city by storm (Matthew 7:13,14). The Kingdom will be God's rule in men, the rule of a new spirit which exalts high life, high ideals, right education, right cultures, and all those principles which are eternally valid. To stop with the thought of the Kingdom as an inner reality, however, is to miss a large part of the meaning of Jesus. The social implications of the Kingdom ideal are tremendous. The Kingdom bears on the institutions of life and the relationship of man and man. Jesus is constantly emphasizing that the best way to serve God is to serve men and the way in which we treat our brothers is to be the final test of our possession of the spirit (Matthew 25:31-46). He wanted men to work together in reciprocal good will, in mutual sacrifice for the common good. The social implications of the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven, in the light of the foregoing, include the whole of the social implications of Jesus message. Rall states some of the fundamental ideas which underlie the social service movement in modern Christianity. It may be readily seen that the following ideas agree in large part with the teachings of Jesus and reflect his influence.

1. "All life is sacred. All a man's life belongs to God. Not all life is equal in importance, there is an inner and an outer; but the rule of God must go to every part.

2. "It is a man's business to Christianize his whole life, and it is the business of society (of men living together in a community, in a nation, in a world life) to Christianize all their relations.

3. "The way to make a better world is to make better men, but the converse is also true: The way to make better men is to get a better world. It will not do to save a few drunkards and let the saloons remain open, to give a little charity and let men work at starving wages, to try to save children by one hour in the Sunday School while they live in moral and physical filth the rest of the week:

4. "The truest spiritual life is social, first as the life lived with God, then as the life lived with men. When a man shuts himself off by himself he dies; when he gives himself to others he lives. It is in his life with others that he really lives, in worship and prayer, in home, in state, in business, in social fellowship, in personal service.

5. "It is because this social life counts for so much that it is of the greatest importance that we Christianize that social order and those social institutions in which this life is expressed: church, home, state, industry, and recreation."[1]

10. The "Letter" of the Sermon on the Mount is Transformed by the Spirit

This thesis has been concerned with certain outstanding social implications of the Sermon on the Mount. It does not purpose to be a study of all the social implications of those three important chapters from Matthew. It would

---

1. Rall, H.F., The Teachings of Jesus, p. 163f

be impossible to single out all the social implications as ultimately, nothing that we do has a purely private bearing. Every action and thought of an individual has its indirect, if not direct, effect upon society as a whole. Although prayer is personal between God and man, the mere expression "Our Father" placed on men's lips involves inferences which can revolutionize social relationships. Prayer has the power to liberate the slave, transform the position of womanhood and childhood, forward peace, and create a new spirit for the basis of industry. Jesus directs social motives outward toward humanity and God by a process which some psychologists have denied, and none has explained. The teaching on oaths (Matt.5:33-37) likewise has very social considerations. Its implications today would concern advertising lies, the breaking of contracts, dishonest salesmanship, misrepresentations, and hypocrisy.

Cognizant of these social implications of the Sermon, the conclusion of this thesis is that Jesus stressed that the social spirit must start with the individual as a unit or cell in society. To make the social group the chief object of worth (as is the basis of modern Fascism, National socialism, and Communism) will ultimately cause society to lose its worth as the individual is the primary source of value. The main stress of Jesus in the Sermon

and elsewhere was to give the individual a certain motive, spirit, power, dynamic, God, call it what you will. In all questions of morality he goes straight to the root, that is, to the disposition and intention of the individual. If we interpret his words literally, we sin against him for this spirit with which he was so concerned transcends all literalism. He laid down no social programme for the suppression of poverty and distress, if by programme we mean a set of definitely, prescribed regulations. With economic conditions and contemporary circumstances he did not interfere.

Jesus was primarily concerned with principles and motivating attitudes. His life, no doubt, was greater than any of the records which we have of him, for his words do not express the whole man. His passion was God and all the thought of his life was filled with God, causing him to teach with fresh and original vision, sincerity, reality, and passion. One of the most tragic verses in the New Testament indicates that his closest followers did not always understand him. "But they understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask him."[1]

In the message of Jesus, therefore, two things have to be distinguished, the actual words which are recorded,

---

1. Mark 9:32

and the power which makes these ideas vital and effectual. "The distinction is a very real one, though it is almost impossible to apply it in any rigid fashion...It was not the object of Jesus to construct a fresh system of knowledge. His purpose was dynamic."[1] There are still problems which are unsolved regarding the origin and transmission of the sermon. There are also problems of interpretation and application, but the truth, the preaching, and the living of the Gospel do not have to wait on the solution of these problems. "The words of Jesus in this Sermon present an ideal of human life, founded upon religious truth and ethical principles, which has been and is intuitively recognized as the highest standard to which mankind can and must attain."[2]

Jesus could not have laid down a compromise code, for that would have been only of ephemeral value. He had to give the ideal code, the following of which meant that one must take up his cross daily. Thus, we should beware of any tendency to turn these "lightning flashes" of Jesus into "safety matches". A time may never be reached when the demands of the Sermon will be fully realized but the very power of Jesus' teaching consists in its holding up to us an ideal which always lies far in front of us. All

1. Scott, E.F., The Gospel and Its Tributaries, p.61
2. Votaw, C.W., Hastings' Bible Dictionary, Extra Vol., p.1

experience has proved, and is still proving that Jesus discovered, more clearly than any other, the true principles of human life. The Sermon carries its own authority and it will become more and more influential as men see its meaning and its congruity with all that is most enlightened in the modern instinct and understanding. The purity of the Teacher, his wholesomeness, the balance and completeness of his character are a few of the great factors which make his attitude towards man, society, and God the ideal for mankind.

The thesis has attempted to bear out the fact that the specific words of Jesus that touch upon the family, property, wealth, poverty, civil affairs, politics, and so forth, are too sporadic to bear the weight of elaborate social schemes and systems. "In view of the extreme meagerness of the materials, it is hardly proper to speak of the 'social teachings' of Jesus. One might speak of the social significance of Jesus' religious teachings, or perhaps even better, of the social implications of his religious teachings, for his teachings are social only by implication."[1] When we read, for instance, "He expected by his teaching, life and death to release in the spirits of men and human institutions social forces which God could

1. Bundy, W.A., Our Recovery of Jesus, p. 158

transform the world into a place more in accord with His will,"[1] we are reading a statement in which admirable practical exposition has usurped the place of historical exegesis. "Christian sociologists fail quite often to recognize that what is termined the 'social Gospel' has only an indirect connection with Jesus' teaching."[2]

Although Jesus placed the emphasis on the individual, his Gospel was never individualistic, although personal, it was not private, and although inward, it was not purely subective. The locus of any Gospel must inevitably be the individual. The fact that the individual in question may see his religious task as being the salvation of society does not alter the basic truth that the religious incentive is in him. In history, all attempts at external reform, whether they are aimed at the abolition of liquor, or war, or greed, are ineffective unless backed by enlightened consciences and socialized personal attitudes. In social progress there is no substitute for "inwardness" not even violent coercion.

The Sermon on the Mount indicates that everything is bound up with the recognition of the infinite value of the human soul. Christianity, if it be loyal to the

---

1. McCown, C.C., The Genesis of the Social Gospel, p.370
2. Easton, B.S., Christ in the Gospels, p. 132

Sermon and Jesus' teaching as a whole, must stand for those factors in society which will allow the individual to do alone what he can best do alone, for those social institutions which will help the individual to do best with his fellows, and for those contacts with fellow-men which will enable the individual to more fully realize his potentialities. The foregoing studies have shown that Jesus did not teach two Gospels, a personal and social, but one, a whole, full-orbed Gospel, which in the nature of the case could not be social without being personal, nor personal without being social. His spirit transcends a narrow interpretation of his words.

Bibliography

Allen, W.C., A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1907.

Allen, W.C., Article in A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, Vol.I, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1906.

Bosworth, E.I., The Life and Teaching of Jesus, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1924.

Bousset, W., Jesus, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1906

Branscomb, B.H. The Teachings of Jesus, The Cokesbury Press, Nashville, Tenn., 1931.

Bundy, W.C., Our Recovery of Jesus, Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, Ind., 1929.

Bundy, W.E., The Religion of Jesus, Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, Ind., 1928.

Burton, E.D., and Goodspeed, E.J., A Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1917.

Case, S.J., The Historicity of Jesus, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1912.

Davies, J.M., Article in Abingdon Bible Commentary, The Abingdon Press, New York, 1929.

Easton, B.S., Christ in the Gospels, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1930.

Easton, B.S., A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1926.

Emmet, C.W., Article in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. X, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1928.

Fiske, G.W., A Study of Jesus' Own Religion, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1932.

Fosdick, H.E., As I See Religion, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1932.

Gilbert, G.H., Mackenzie, W.D. Articles in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol.VII. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1928.

Gore, Charles, Christ and Society, G.Allen and Unwin Ltd. London, 1928.

Harnack, Adolf, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, 2nd, enl. and rev. ed. G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1908.

Harnack, Adolf, The Sayings of Jesus, G.P.Putnam's Sons, New York, 1908.

Harnack, Adolf, What is Christianity? Williams and Norgate, London, 1901.

Holtzmann, O., The Life of Jesus, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1904.

Jenks, J.W., Social Significance of the Teachings of Jesus, The Association Press, New York, 1912.

Jones, L.S., The Christ of the Mount, Abingdon Press, New York, 1931.

Kent, C.F., The Life and Teachings of Jesus, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1931.

Kent, C.F., The Social Teachings of the Prophets and Jesus, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1917.

Kent, C.F. and Jenks, J.W., Jesus' Principles of Living, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1920.

King, H.C., The Ethics of Jesus, The Macmillan Co. New York, 1910.

Klausner, J., Jesus of Nazareth, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1929.

Loisy, Alfred, Les Evangiles Synpotiques, Vol.I, Ceffonds, Paris, 1907.

Luther, Martin, Primary Works, Henry Wace and C.A.Buchheim editors, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1896.

Manson, T.W., The Teachings of Jesus, University Press, Cambridge, 1931.

Mathews, Shalier, The Social Teaching of Jesus, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1892.

Montefiore, C.J.G., The Hibbert Lectures, Williams and Norgate, London, 1892.

Montgomery, J.H., The Social Message of Jesus, The Abingdon Press, New York, 1923.

Moore, G.F., Judaism, Oxford University Press, London, 1927.

McConnell, F.J., Christianity and Coercion, Cokesbury Press, Nashville, Tenn., 1933.

McConnell, F.J., Social Control, The University of Chicago Press, 1932.

McCown, C.C., The Genesis of the Social Gospel, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1929.

McKoy, C.F., The Art of Jesus as a Teacher, The Judson Press, Philadelphia, Pa., 1930.

Mc Neil, A.H., A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1929.

Peabody, F.G., Jesus Christ and the Social Question, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1924.

Plummer, A., Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew, Robert Scott, Rexburghe House London, 1915.

Rall, H.F., The Life of Jesus, Abingdon Press, New York, 1917.

Rall, H.F., The Teachings of Jesus, The Methodist Book Concern, New York, 1918.

Rashdall, H., Conscience and Christ, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1916.

Rauschenbusch, W., A Theology for a Social Gospel, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1922.

Rauschenbusch, W., Christianity and the Social Crisis, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1914.

Rauschenbusch, W., The Social Principles of Jesus, Methodist Book Concern, New York, 1916.

Robinson, P.W., The Sayings of Jesus, Harper and Brother, New York, 1930.

Sanday, W., Outlines of the Life of Christ, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1917.

Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1911.

Scott, E.F., The Ethical Teachings of Jesus, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1924.

Scott, E.F., The Gospel and Its Tributaries, T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1928.

Scott, E.F., The Kingdom of God in the New Testament, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1931.

Simkhovitch, V.G., Toward the Understanding of Jesus, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1925.

Smith, David, A Commentary on the Four Gospels - Matthew, Doubleday, Doran and Co., New York, 1928.

Stevens, G.B., The Teaching of Jesus, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1919.

Votaw, C.W., Article in A Dictionary of the Bible, Extra Volume, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1904.

Ward, H.F., The New Social Order, The Macmillan Co. New York, 1919.

Warschauer, J., The Historical Life of Jesus, The Macmillan Co., 1927.

Weiss, B., The Life of Jesus. Volume II. T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1894.

Wendt, H.H., The Teachings of Jesus, Volumes I and II. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1897.

Wright, T.H., The Sermon on the Mount for Today, T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1927.

A Digest of the Thesis -

The purpose of the study is to attempt to discover a social message in the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew's Gospel.

Part I.

After giving W.C. Allen's analysis of the contents of the Sermon, the writer proceeds to discuss the original form of the discourse. It is pointed out that even though the discourse is a compilation, the theme and substance of the Sermon are built about an authentic discourse of Jesus. Although Matthew omits all indications of date, it is quite obvious that it is incorrect to place the Sermon at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. Further circumstances of the delivery of the discourse are discussed. The writer in studying the relationship between the Matthean account of the Sermon and parallel and closely parallel sections in Luke, follows Votaw's critical study. Various elements in the environment of Jesus are stressed, especially those factors which would effect him as a teacher. The bearing of the apocalyptism of his day upon his message to society is given special attention. Jesus as a teacher is briefly discussed and certain of his main characteristics are pointed out.

Part II.

Following the sketchy historical background of the Sermon, the main problem of the thesis is studied. The Beatitudes indicate upon examination that the relationship and attitude which is exalted necessitates social relationships and a social spirit. None of the Beatitudes is what might be called a "social teaching" but rather certain of them imply a social attitude. There are three sections of the thesis devoted to a study of how Jesus confirmed certain parts of the Jewish Law, transformed, and abrogated it. He re-established the principles which underlay certain of the Ten Commandments. Murder, adultery, and non-resistance are shown to have great social significance, and Jesus' teaching on these subjects is primarily concerned with the spirit, motive and disposition and relationship between men and societies.

Jesus in his teaching on material possessions is anxious that men should see life's values in proper perspective and proper relationship. He doesn't give us detailed rules or laws to guide us in the use of material possessions, but he exalts a certain social spirit. Likewise, in the Golden Rule, great social implications are seen. Although the Rule is stated in such a way as to suggest a personal attitude, it involves a social spirit

in the broadest sense. After studying Jesus' meaning of the term "Kingdom of God" the writer of the thesis concludes that the term involves Jesus' whole conception of life, his complete teaching and spirit regarding personal and social adjustments between god and man and man and man.

The conclusion of thesis is anticipated throughout, for each of the sections of the Sermon on the Mount which is studied indicates that Jesus stressed a social spirit which started within the individual. Jesus exalted the spirit, the motive, the disposition of the individual but such a spirit as he teaches involves limitless social implications. His spirit transcends his words and his words cannot be properly interpreted without seeing his life, teachings, and spirit as a whole. The writer contends that it is hardly proper to speak of the "social teachings" of Jesus simply because none of his teachings are primarily social. Rather, his teachings for the individual imply social relationships. In brief, Jesus did not teach two Gospels, a personal and social, but one, a whole, full-orbed Gospel, which by its nature was not personal without being social, nor was it social without being personal. Personal and social relationships are both involved and implied in the Sermon on the Mount.